



# **MENOMINEE INDIAN TRIBE OF WISCONSIN**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Stewards of the Sturgeon**

*(Keshena, WI)* - The Menominee Nation would like to reach out to our friends and neighbors in the Shawano community who we share a common interest with in protecting our natural resources along the Wolf River corridor. For the Menominee, the Wolf River has always been a great gift from our Creator. Deeply rooted in our culture and traditions, the Wolf River has provided the sustenance that has helped our people survive for many years. It has been said through our oral history that when the water from the melting ice and snow rises to a certain level, a drum beat can be heard that calls the sturgeon home to their ancestral spawning grounds located at Keshena Falls.

It is important for our friends, neighbors, and others to understand the historical, spiritual, and cultural connection of the sturgeon to the Menominee people. The Menominee have existed here on this land since our creation well over 10,000 year ago. Before the dams were created, before Shawano became a city, and before the State of Wisconsin was created, the Menominee harvested sturgeon along the banks of the Wolf River at Keshena Falls. This has been well documented within our oral history and by anthropological evidence. So important to us was the sturgeon that one of our sub clans was named for the sturgeon. This clan had the responsibility to say when the harvest could start and performed the ceremonies and feasts of the sturgeon. We took only what was needed and used every part of the sturgeon. The sturgeon was used to fight tuberculosis, provide remedies for ear and head aches, as well as, providing the spiritual food for our medicine lodges and other ceremonies. After the Shawano and Balsam Row dams were created many years ago, we lost our ability to practice one of our most significant cultural traditions of celebrating the spawning of the sturgeon at Keshena Falls.

As we have seen over the last week, the Sturgeon once again return to the Shawano Dam (Sturgeon Park), we celebrate with you the return of this great fish. However, for the Menominee, the celebration turns to sadness as we once again see the sturgeon struggle to continue their spawning run upstream, but are impeded by the dams.

The Menominee Nation wants to work together with the community of Shawano, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and other stakeholders to restore the sturgeon to their full historical spawning range to Keshena Falls. We believe this can be achieved in part by implementation of fish ladders and other mechanisms that allow fish passage at the dam sites while still keeping the dams in place. We believe this to be the best solution for all involved. The sturgeon population may continue to grow and flourish to levels we have not seen before and both communities would bear witness to the stewardship of this great fish, which sets an example for other river system communities.

Our primary goal in this pursuit of collaboration is to see both communities thrive economically while living in harmony with our natural environment and to protect these resources for our future generations. The Menominee Nation sincerely and respectfully extends this offer to work in collaboration with you to realize and achieve this goal.

For more information please contact Chairman Randal Chevalier at (715) 799-5114 or via email at [rchevalier@mitw.org](mailto:rchevalier@mitw.org)